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ABSTRACT

A special curriculum to be used in training sessions on Mexican American culture was developed to assist Texas Department of Human Resources personnel with service delivery for Mexican American children. Designed to heighten awareness in caseworkers and other personnel on the cultural variables affecting their relationship with Mexican American clients, the curriculum is organized into three modules which may be conducted in two days or in three half-day sessions. The first module introduces the Mexican American family and culture, the Mexican heritage in Texas, the role of culture in social casework, and the practice of Curanderismo, which involves faith healing and the use of medicinal herbs. The second module involves the Mexican American community as it looks at the barrio and its resources and undesirable characteristics. It also examines the effects of migrant life on many Mexican Americans. Situational conditions related to child welfare and resources useful to child welfare in the barrio are discussed, along with obstacles to effective casework intervention. The final module deals with aspects of the Mexican American family, including child abuse and neglect, the effect of poverty as it relates to neglect cases, family relationships, and patterns of behavior common to Mexican American children. Videotapes and slides are used as supplements. Discussions to exchange ideas and opinions are considered essential to the successful learning process and conclude each module. (DS)

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Coursebook

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MAY 1979

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Texas Department of Human Resources, 1978

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AAT

August, 1978

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1.0

"The Hispanic Culture of America"

1.1

Course Introduction

RATIONALE

Program Purpose

The Center for Social Work Research (CSWR), The University of Texas at Austin, was informed by the Social Services Program of the Texas Department of Human Resources (TDHR) of a need for a new curriculum on Mexican-American culture. The course is designed to heighten awareness in caseworkers and other TDHR personnel concerning cultural variables which affect the relationship of Mexican-American clients and TDHR workers. The Center, having devoted considerable energy to creating classroom curriculum in this area, has responded by providing consultation for development of a training strategy and the final curriculum product.

The curriculum development process was traditional in nature, yet innovative in several respects. It drew from sound qualitative assessment surveys. Continuous monitoring and modification were made possible by input from clientele, as well as from caseworkers across the state. An underlying assumption was that curriculum content should be tied to the day-to-day experiences of the Department of Human Resources workers in a specific program. This curriculum is therefore program-oriented for child protective service workers.

Design and Suggested Use

The curriculum is arranged into three separate modules which may be conducted in two days or in three half-day sessions, depending on local scheduling requirements. The modules consist of numbered components in the following format:

1. a general introduction to the module's content (videotape)
2. a lecture or slide presentation dealing with the same content above, but more specifically oriented to the direct service worker
3. a discussion session for exchange of ideas and opinions.

Coursebook and audiovisual content is necessary for substance, but open discussion is essential to the successful learning process. Since culture is often a sensitive topic, the participant must feel free to bring his or her opinions and beliefs out into the open in order to consider the content objectively.

Goal

The goal is to help Department of Human Resources personnel in their interaction with the service delivery for Mexican-American children.

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The extended family was the pillar of the early Mexican frontier society. Together, the family resisted the elemental forces and other obstacles of this rugged lifestyle through unity.

1.2

The Mexican-American Family in Historical Perspective

Topic

Introduction to the Mexican-American household and culture

Objectives

1. Describe the Mexican-American family.
2. Define and know background of *curanderismo.*

Activity

Videotape

Content

The Mexican-American Family

An extended family is one which includes more than two generations living in the same household. Many modern Mexican-Americans were reared in households which included their grandparents, their parents, an uncle or aunt, and maybe even their children—four generations living under one roof in a traditionally structured family arrangement. The 1970 Census found that six percent of the Mexican-American families in Texas (twice the average in the state) are extended families living together. Regardless of the actual predominance of the extended family today, however, many more Mexican-Americans retain the old values, practices, and attitudes from their own experiences growing up in an extended family, which may strongly influence their interface with modern society.

The Spanish expeditions which founded Texas in the 1970s brought entire extended families of Spaniards to settle such communities as San Antonio, Goliad, Victoria, Laredo, and Nacogdoches. In some cases, civilized tribes of the Aztec nation also brought their own tribal families called *calpulli* (pronounced kal POO yee) to settle in these same communities. These colonies established neighborhoods or *barrios* (BAR yos) which remained very closely knit for over a century in the same location. Some families are still living in the same neighborhoods or lands as their ancestors who were part of the original settlement.

The family patriarch was usually a rancher. His role was to support and defend the family from hostile elements; home and child-rearing were the matriarch's exclusive domain.

The Spanish and Aztec families usually intermarried, producing the mixed-blood or mestizo (mess TEE so) race, but family structure and patterns remained fixed. The eldest male was the patriarch, commanding authority and the respect of all his sons, daughters, and grandchildren. His sons might marry, but the rugged frontier Texas lifestyle demanded that they remain on the old man's estate or *rancho* for the defense of the family. Thus, the male's role was one of strength and prestige. Large families were at a premium, and it was assumed that brother and sister, father and son would always provide for one another. When grandparents became aged and disabled, their sons, daughters, and grandchildren know they should provide for them. Government played a minimal role in family security.

Many modern Mexican-Americans have retained the traditional values of the extended family; consequently, they may totally disregard or even shun alternatives for the services once provided by the family. In some cases, however, migration and urbanization have separated families, leaving various family members stranded in urban apartment settings. These Mexican-Americans may be in great need of financial and social services; yet many of them do not request aid simply because public assistance is so foreign to their upbringing and experience.

Curanderismo (koor ahn der EES mo)

Curanderismo is the Mexican practice of home remedies and folk healing which often involves prayer and the use of medicinal herbs. Recent surveys in San Antonio, Austin, El Paso, and the Rio Grande Valley indicate the existence of curanderismo practices, especially among older Mexican-Americans. As with other ethnic or folk remedies, some curanderismo remedies work for obvious reasons, some work despite the disbelief of modern scientists, and others serve no other purpose than to give psychological relief to the patient. In any case, such customs reflect cultural heritage, and should be dealt with as cautiously as any other sensitive belief.

Mexican-American curanderismo dates back to Aztec practice. Many older Mexican-Americans in Texas still talk about having *empacho, mal ojo,* or

In the modern barrio, the influence of curanderismo is still significant, especially among the elderly. Special herbs are administered as remedies for folk illnesses.

aire—illnesses peculiar to the Mexican culture. Just as their Aztec ancestors, some modern Mexican-Americans still treat a stomachache with tea made from *estafiate* or *ruda* leaves. Many of the modern medicines in American pharmacology are derived from the same Aztec herbs. Thus, a Mexican-American may wish to take a spoonful of Kaopectate Brand medicine made by the Upjohn Company or he may prefer to take the old Indian tea made from pectin, the ingredient used by Upjohn, as his ancestors did.

In most cases, Mexican-Americans recognize the substantial difference between penicillin and *estafiate* tea, but they continue to grow the herbs in flowerbeds and backyard gardens. These plants give the home a fragrance, a distinct greenery, and a ready source of herbs and spices for traditional Mexican recipes, as well.

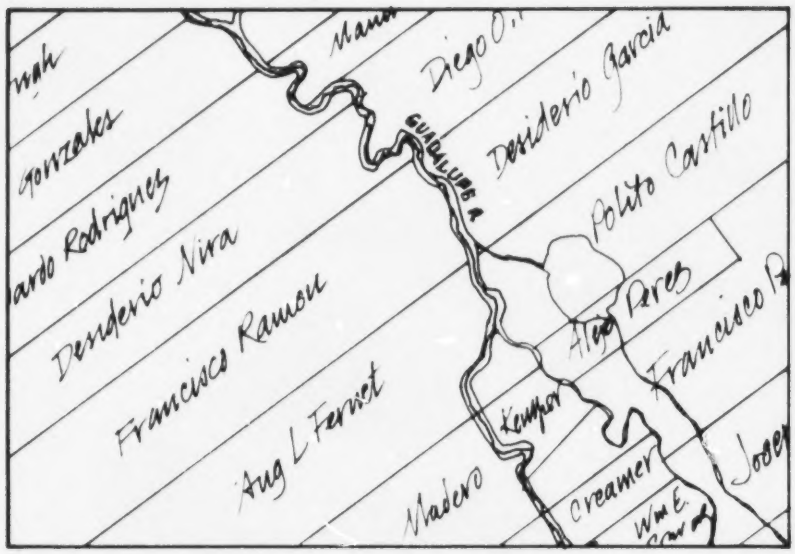
The person who administers the treatment is the *curandero* (koor ahn DER o). Usually a respected citizen among the elderly in the barrio, the curandero offers prayer, advice, and a reassuring voice. His influence is significant, despite questionable medicinal value.

Mexican Heritage in Texas

In viewing or studying the Mexican culture, many American writers have overlooked many aspects which Americans have borrowed. If these borrowed aspects are identified, perhaps the Mexican culture may be seen from a different perspective.

When the Anglo-American frontier arrived in Texas in the 1820s, the Mexican culture had been established here for over a century. The Anglo-Americans who came westward into Texas were buckskin-clad pioneer farmers like Davy Crockett or Stephen F. Austin. They walked in leather moccasins and planted corn, wheat, and tobacco. But when they left Texas to continue their westward trek to the Pacific after 1850, they had changed from the coonskin-capped pioneers to mounted cowboys. In the three decades before the end of the Mexican War in 1848, the Americans had taken on almost every aspect of the Mexican life that existed in Texas in 1920.

In Texas, the Mexican taught the Anglo-American how to work huge herds of Longhorns on horseback, how to rope and break a wild mustang, and how



The original Spanish land grant or porción provided maximum acreage, while allowing each landowner a share of the water supply. The subdivisions of many modern barrios still reflect the basic shape of the porción.

to dress for the work on horseback. That is why the cowboy's dress and terminology is almost exclusively Mexican—from the boots and spurs to the lariat, lasso, rodeo, and rancho.

More importantly, the Anglo-American discovered and used Mexican principles in the management of resources. He borrowed Mexican laws for management of livestock, water, and land which are still basics of Texas law and government. For example, the Texas laws on community property are based on the old Tejano laws giving women the right to own personal property before and after marriage. Water flowing through rivers in Texas belongs to the people in keeping with the Mexican principle. The riverbank may belong to a rancher, but the water belongs to the people.

The Mexican cultural traits which Anglo-American society did not borrow are the same traits which American anthropologists have tended to label as pathological and self-destructive. They involve Mexican attitudes toward race, family, and community. Today, social work professionals are beginning to realize that these traits are valuable, if viewed from a positive perspective.

The Mexican culture traits in Texas are not difficult to identify. They are the traits which make Texas distinctive. They include the colorful ranching industry, the vast land grants, and the informal pace of living. Thus, Texans can be thankful for the Mexican heritage of their state.

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1.3

The Role of Culture in Social Casework

Topic

Definition and explanation of culture in interpersonal relations

Objectives

1. Define culture.
2. Give one example of intrinsic cultural roots or heritage.
3. Give one example of situational conditions.

Activity

Lecture-slide presentation (Segment A)

Content

Culture

Culture, as stated by Milton M. Gordon, "refers to the social heritage of man—the ways of acting and the ways of doing things which are passed down from one generation to the next" (Gordon, *Assimilation,* 1964). This heritage is taught or demonstrated informally by parents and peers, and is learned through a process called socialization. Culture includes beliefs, art, morals, customs, values, knowledge, skills, and any other behavior patterns which are acceptable within a society. One of the most important aspects of culture is that it is dynamic. Culture is constantly changing, and the rate of change varies from one person to the next. It is difficult to describe or discuss a rule of life which is firm and fast. Such a view leads to stereotyping the members of that culture.

Stereotype

A stereotype is a "category that singles out an individual as sharing certain assumed characteristics on the basis of his or her group membership" (Vander Zanden, *American Minority Relations,* 1966, p. 80). For example, if a person is a Mexican-American, he or she is assumed to have a Spanish surname. Actually, many Mexican-Americans have Anglo-Saxon, German, Irish, or other surnames. In such cases, the stereotype assumption is incorrect.

Stereotypes can be erroneous, distorted, even naive or harmful. If a person assumes that Mexican-Americans are named Mexican-Americans because all of them were born in Mexico, then he or she is distorting reality. Relatively few Mexican-Americans were born in Mexico; most Mexican-American families have been in the United States for decades; many came to this land directly from Europe; and many are descended from bloodlines native to North America. Mexican-American families in Texas are of several national origins.

Stereotypes are often perpetuated by seemingly harmless jokes or sayings. Thus, a corn chip product advertisement might depict a Mexican as a "bandito." Unfortunately, this ad could reinforce negative stereotypes in the minds of important persons such as employers, judges, and policemen.

If a social worker encounters many Mexican-Americans who do not actively seek out the services of the Department of Human Resources, he or she may begin to assume that Mexican-Americans do not want or need the services. Or, it is easy to accept the rationale that "The Mexican is too proud." Such a stereotype would lead the social worker to disregard many needs of his or her clients. The only solution is, first, for the social worker to avoid contributing to the problem by stereotyping, and, next, to treat each person as an individual.

An "On-the-Spot Cultural Assessment"

What is the Mexican-American culture? There are several ways to describe it, but the only safe way is to remember that each person regardless of culture, is

an individual. A convenient approach is for social workers to be familiar with the various traits of a particular culture. For example, if the Mexican-American culture is said to practice curanderismo, a social worker might ask, "Does this particular client practice curanderismo?" Fernando Peñalosa suggests that one ask himself "To what extent . . . does a Mexican-American actually practice a given cultural trait?" (Peñalosa, "Definition of the Mexican-American," *Aztlań*).

Different, Not Worse

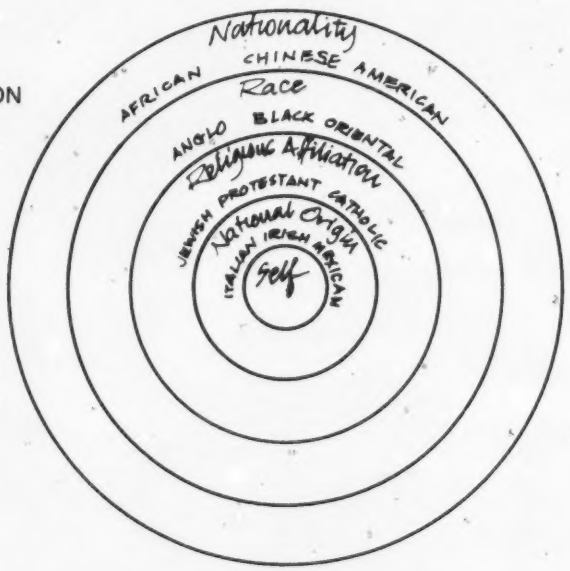
To be *ethnocentric* is to evaluate another culture in terms of a person's own cultural values. For example, if a culture values a cow very highly as prime beef for the table, an ethnocentric person who is a member of that culture might criticize another culture for "wasting" ceremonial cows as religious figures. This person might say that his or her beliefs are "religion" while the beliefs of another person are pure "superstition."

All cultures have their own ways of doing things. The Eskimos kiss by rubbing noses. Russian men normally meet by kissing mouth to mouth. Japanese greet by bowing. Americans hold the fork in either hand to eat, depending on whether they are right-handed or left-handed. Turks frown on such ambidexterity. American Boy Scouts call themselves Bears, Wolves, and Lions. These names would be unthinkable for people in Mohammedan society. Each society prescribes the standard or normal behavior for its members. As long as a person remains within a cultural group, he or she is rewarded for learning and following the established behavior patterns.

When persons of one cultural group enter another culture group, however, they may find themselves practicing inappropriate norms. Comfortable customs and values are suddenly ostracized or punished. They find themselves being forced to learn new skills or coping mechanisms. In a rapidly changing society like America, the timelag in learning the new coping mechanisms may be even more pronounced.

An interesting aspect of culture is the way societies borrow from one another. When American writer Josiah Gregg first traveled the Old Santa Fe Trail and met the Mexicans in the 1820s, he was repulsed to report that the women wore lip rouge, smoked cigarettes, revealed their ankles, and ate tacos with-

SELF-PERCEPTION



Ethnocentricity in American society, individuals tend to identify themselves from an ethnic viewpoint by national origin, religious affiliation, *race, and nationality. (National Origin refers to ancestry; nationality to citizenship.) All of these categories combine and directly relate to the* Self.

Migrants have fewer rights and protections than any other population group in the U.S. Children of migrants, moving from one workfield to another, seldom complete a year in the same school.

out a fork by holding them in their fingers. Today it is common for women to dress this way, and even Amy Vanderbilt might have had difficulty eating a crisp taco with a fork. Americans have also learned to wear high-heeled boots, spurs, and big hats when working cattle by horseback.

Mexicans borrowed from the Americans in the 1820s as well. They learned about the jury system, capitalism, and technology. In fact, the cultural exchange in the early 1800s was so great that it is often difficult to trace the traits to one particular culture. For example, beans and chili are certainly Mexican, but barbecue is more difficult to trace. It may even be French. All of this cultural borrowing indicates that although another culture may be different, it is not necessarily worse.

Cultural Roots or Situational Conditions?

Many characteristics found in a culture reflect its historic roots or heritage. In the Mexican-American culture, these characteristics include the Spanish language, the traditional customs, old beliefs, and attitudes about race and origin. They are intrinsically a part of the culture.

Whenever one culture group comes into contact with another, new customs are developed or borrowed. These new customs or characteristics are extrinsic. Extrinsic characteristics are not part of the original cultural heritage, but are developed as a result of immigration, conflict, or contact with the other culture. They may include an accent imposed on the new language, a kind of dress different from the old culture, and even a set of attitudes and values which developed as a result of the new minority status. Many Mexican-Americans exhibit extrinsic characteristics such as a Spanish accent in English, lack of education, and a sense of alienation from governmental institutions. These traits are not traditionally Mexican; they are more likely the result of poor education in the barrios and years of life in migrant work. Instead of making this distinction, however, most people mistakenly attribute the extrinsic traits to the Mexican heritage.

An interesting application of extrinsic traits is the idea of a "culture of poverty" proposed by anthropologist Oscar Lewis. In his studies of cultures around the world, Lewis was surprised by the striking similarity in the cultural

traits exhibited by poor people. He suggested that there is a culture of poverty, just as there is a culture of Mexicans, Eskimos, Anglo-Americans, Irish, or Turks. The poor, regardless of race or national origin, seem to have distinctive family structure, time orientation, and attitudes towards government, education, and sanitation, according to Lewis.

Lewis' concept of a culture of poverty has been greatly challenged by modern social scientists as being too simplistic. The problem of Lewis' concept is that it tends unrealistically to depict all poor people as being abject or chronically poor. Actually, many poor people do not exhibit the traditional traits of Lewis' poverty model. And even among those that do, sociologists contend, these characteristics do not constitute a "culture" which is necessarily passed down from one generation to the next, even though this may appear to happen in some individual families.

Many of the cultural characteristics described above are extrinsic. They are not part of the culture. They may be the result of oppressive conditions of poverty, discrimination, or deprivation. Just as a traditional or intrinsic culture can change, so can the extrinsic characteristics change or improve after the oppressive conditions have been alleviated. Thus, emphasis should be placed on identifying the conditions of the situation, as well as the intrinsic cultural characteristics of the clients.

Situational Conditions

Situational conditions can create stress in the life of the poor, oppressed, or deprived. Situational conditions may cause poor or oppressed persons to develop dysfunctional traits or behaviors. These conditions include inadequate housing, illiteracy, drug abuse, discrimination, poor health, or hostile environment. They are seldom the result of intrinsic or traditional culture.

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Activity

Lecture—Slide Presentation (Segment B)

What is the Mexican-American Culture?

Everyone has a different view or opinion of the Mexican-American culture. Some people have a rather negative view of it, while others see it more positively. Most opinions fall into three major categories of models of what the Mexican-American culture is. Following are brief descriptions of these models.

Cultural Models of the Mexican-American

The traditional view or model of the Mexican-American culture is largely a popular stereotype. This view was promulgated by early Hollywood movies, biased historical accounts, and some anthropologists who failed to emphasize the dynamic character of culture. According to this view, the typical Mexican-

American was short, dark, Catholic, born in Mexico, and cared little for education or material well-being. Mexican-American men were indirect and scheming but macho, and women were totally subservient.

A second perspective describes the Mexican-American in terms of assimilation. The assimilation model maintains that although most Mexican-Americans are still in the traditional cultural mold described earlier, many are beginning to accept the values and patterns of Anglo-American life. They are assimilating, according to this model, and the logical result is that eventually all Mexican-Americans will shed their former Mexican traits and simply "melt" into American society.

A third model of the Mexican-American culture, put forth largely by Chicano intellectuals in the 1960s, maintains that the Mexican-American culture was molded by heritage plus conflict. According to this perspective, Mexican-Americans have been exploited, colonized, and abused by a racist system in the United States. Thus, the Mexican-Americans have been economically subjugated but are culturally defiant.

Each of these models offers some cogent facts, but none is entirely correct or incorrect. Rather than to try to describe the Mexican-American culture as existing in a homogenous state, it is safer to identify the traits in a particular individual. It is possible for one Mexican-American to possess traits of all three models. The cultural traits of a Mexican-American client should be assessed from an open-ended perspective. One client may speak no English, shun assimilation entirely, but speak highly of American capitalism and technology. Another may speak excellent English, be educated, but want nothing to do with government agencies. Much depends on which end of the American system a person has experienced. In any case, a professional caseworker must know the basic facts and figures about the Mexican-American population in the U.S.

Basic Facts

The latest government estimate of the Spanish-surnamed population in the United States is 12 million. The United States Spanish-surnamed population thus ranks fifth in the world behind Spain, Mexico, Argentina, and Colombia and ahead of Peru, Venezuela, and Chile. Eighty-five percent of the Spanish-surnamed in the United States live in the Southwest. Of all the states, California and Texas have the greatest numbers of Mexican-Americans, although many northern industrial states have registered increasing numbers throughout the twentieth century.

Population Growth

There are three major factors in the population growth of the Mexican-American in the twentieth century:

1. *Natives:* A substantial portion of the Mexican-American population is descended from the native Mexican populace which inhabited the present Southwest long before the coming of the Anglo-American.
2. *Immigration:* Mexican immigrants have continued to enter the United States making up about 10 percent of the total immigration to this country throughout the twentieth century.
3. *Birthrate:* Mexican-Americans have maintained the highest birthrate in the nation for decades.

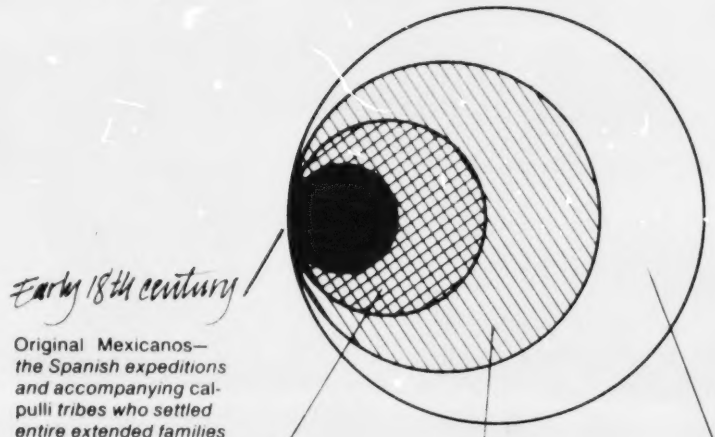
These three factors have made the Mexican-American the nation's fastest growing and second largest ethnic minority today.

Geographic Patterns

Eighty-five percent of the estimated 12 million Spanish-surnamed citizens live in the Southwest, most of whom are Mexican-Americans. Of the two million Mexican-American population in Texas in 1970, most were concentrated

*Rising Population Growth (early 18th–20th Century)**

* *The median family size for Mexican-American families in Texas is 4.7, compared to 3.6 for all families in the state.*



Early 18th century

Original Mexicanos—*the Spanish expeditions and accompanying calpulli tribes who settled entire extended families in early towns.*

Early 19th century

Tejanos—After Texas became a state, these early Mexicans became Texas citizens.

Early 20th century

New Immigrants—After the Mexican Revolution of 1910, Mexicans seeking work and security poured into the U.S. Many never received citizenship; i.e., many modern-day elderly were part of this population.

Today

20th Century Mexican-Americans—living, for the most part, in the urban and rural Southwest.

along the Rio Grande counties and in the urban areas of the state. In fact, about 85 percent of the Mexican-Americans live in urban areas in Texas.

Population Characteristics

As a group, Mexican-Americans reflect distinctive social characteristics in several key categories. As one investigative committee of the federal government reported on the Spanish-speaking population, "It ranks at the bottom of the scale, absolutely last" (U.S. Cabinet Committee, *Annual Report*, 1971). Following are the basic social characteristics of this population group:

1. *Nativity:* Most Mexican-Americans are U.S.-born citizens. By 1960, over 85 percent of the nation's Mexican-Americans were natives of the United States, and over 50 percent of them were of American parentage as well. In Texas by 1970, 90 percent were Texas-born, 75 percent of Texas parentage. During the same period, only nine percent of them were born in Mexico. Despite this high nativity rate, however, Mexican-Americans exhibit the highest language and cultural "loyalty" among the nation's ethnic groups. In Texas, for example, 87 percent speak Spanish. This cultural persistence tends to perpetuate the stereotype of the Mexican-Americans as being foreigners.

2. *Education:* Mexican-Americans have the lowest level of education in the Southwest. In Texas, they have 7.2 years of education compared to the 9.7 years for blacks and 11.6 for Anglos. Thirty-three percent of the Mexican-Americans in Texas have less than five years of education. A recent study by the Civil Rights Commission revealed in 1969 that Texas school financing alloted Mexican-American school districts only three-fifths as much money as Anglo districts. Historical studies reveal that the situation was worse around

One in three Mexican-Americans live below the poverty level.

the turn of the century when today's elderly were young.

3. *Poverty:* Mexican-American families are among the poorest in the nation and the state. Nationally, the Mexican-American family income was $5,600 in 1971, or 70 percent for all families in the nation. In Texas, 31 percent of the Mexican-American families were below the poverty level, as compared to 15 percent for all families in the state.

4. *Family:* Mexican-Americans have the largest families and highest fertility rate in the nation. In Texas, six percent of the Mexican-American households are of the extended family structure compared to three percent of all ethnic groups in the state. The mean size of the Mexican-American family is 4.7, while the mean family size for all families in Texas is 3.6. Poor Mexican-American families are even larger.

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1.4

Now, Let's Talk About It

Topic

Culture, the Mexican-American client, and the Department of Human Resources

Objectives

1. View and discuss culture objectively.
2. Consider another person's views on culture.
3. Identify popular stereotypes and tell how they may be harmful to clients.

Activity

Open discussion

Content

Review

1. An extended family is one which includes _____ generations living in the same household.
2. If only a few Mexican-Americans live in extended family households, why is the concept still so important to the Mexican-American community today?
3. Curanderismo is the Mexican practice of home remedies and folk healing which often involves _____ and the use of _____.
4. Situational conditions are those conditions which can create stress in the life of the poor or oppressed. They may include . . .
5. What is one major factor in the population growth of the Mexican-American in the twentieth century?
6. Are the Mexican-Americans of Texas urban or rural dwellers?
7. What does the census reveal about the education level of the Mexican-American as compared to Blacks and Anglos? Is it higher or lower? How about birthrate?
8. The traditional model of the Mexican-American culture depicts a short, dark, Catholic immigrant from Mexico. (true/false)
9. If the Assimilation Model of the Mexican-American culture maintains that the Mexican-American will melt into American society, and the Conflict Model contends that racism prevents assimilation, which model is correct?
10. If a Mexican-American client hesitates to speak English, what can a social worker safely assume about the client's attitude toward Anglo-Americans and the American government?

2.0

"The Mexican-American Community"

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2.1

The Barrio Perspective

Topic

Problems and Resources of the Barrio

Objectives

1. List three undesirable characteristics of the barrio.
2. List three resources in the barrio.
3. Describe the effects that migrant life has had on many Mexican-Americans in the twentieth century.

Activity

Videotape

Content

Formation of the Barrio

In the United States, the word barrio connotes a slum, a brown ghetto. Actually, the traditional meaning of the word in Mexico and Spain is neighborhood.

The Texas barrio was born shortly after the turn of the century when Texas was industrializing and Mexican-Americans began urbanizing. Another factor was the mass immigration of Mexicans into Texas at that time. Over 600 thousand Mexicans came into Texas between 1910 and 1920. Thus, as native Mexican-American citizens were moving into town, Mexican aliens poured into the same neighborhoods. For the Anglo residents who had begun to urbanize 30 years earlier, there was no distinction between Mexican-American and Mexican alien—they were all just "Mexicans."

The barrio did not form by accident; several factors created it. First, there were economic reasons. Mexican-Americans were employed largely in canneries, packing sheds, warehouses, and agricultural fields, so their neighborhoods sprang up around these work areas. Mexicans, who were recruited heavily into railroad construction, lived near the depots in "row houses" built by the Atchison, Topeka, and Sante Fe or the Southern Pacific rail lines. Even today, the old part of many Texas barrios is found on or across the tracks.

But there were other factors creating the poverty and segregation in the barrio. City fathers zoned barrio lots smaller to attract the poorer residents. Real estate agents offered easy access to barrio dwellings under usurious terms. Worse, many towns displayed signs or notices prohibiting Mexican-Americans in the nicer part of town.

A New Urban Culture

Moving into town, Mexican-Americans formed more than just a physical community. They also formed new urban cultural characteristics. A distinctive example was the *pachuco*, a Mexican-American youth who had broken away from rural patterns and developed his own new style of attire, vocabulary, and image. He had a reputation for being defiant. And indeed, he challenged the new environment and refused to assimilate. At the same time, however, he broke away from his own traditional culture by departing from the ways of his family. To the pachuco, the peers or the street gang tended to replace family allegiance. In many ways, today's Chicano youths echo the earlier challange of the pachucos.

Problems

Even today as a result of economic segregation, the barrio suffers from inadequate facilities. A barrio typically has many narrower, unpaved streets. It has fewer curbs and improved bridges. In dry weather, this results in clouds of dust being raised by passing autos, and in rainy weather, mud, floods, and

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Those Mexican-American youths known as Pachucos, alienated and isolated from their own traditional Mexican culture and the Anglo society, formed their own cultural identity.

even drownings. City utilities are also inadequate. Sewer and water mains are smaller, causing sewage back-up and low water pressure. The barrio typically has a high rate of violent crimes as opposed to white-collar crimes.

The barrio has often been called a colony of the modern city. While the barrio houses the tax-paying working man and factories, it rarely contains a city hall, city hospital, or a nice shopping area. Traditionally, schools and churches have been segregated as well. So, while the barrio provides taxes and labor, it receives fewer city services.

Resources

Mexican-Americans have often depended on their own resources to compensate for the problems of the barrio. One resource was the *escuelita* or Mexican-American field school conducted by a Mexican teacher in a neighborhood home. Every old barrio had a few escuelitas, where many of today's "uneducated" Mexican-Americans learned the basics of reading, writing, and their Mexican history. Since parents paid for these schools out of their own pockets, Mexican-Americans actually paid double for education—they paid school taxes for the public schools which barred Mexican-Americans, and they paid for their own escuelitas.

Another resource was the mutual aid society. Many Texas towns such as Austin, Waelder, Harlingen, Goliad, San Antonio, and Houston were headquarters for these Mexican-American insurance societies. One mutual aid society, Sociedad Ignacio Zaragoza of Goliad, Texas, offered life, health, and unemployment insurance to its members. Since members were barrio neighbors and relatives, the society maintained a quality of intimacy which lent security to barrio residents. Since modern migration and urbanization, society members are scattered far and wide, but many Mexican-Americans still look to the barrio for their own form of "social security."

The curandero was often the only "doctor" available to Mexican-Americans. Within the barrios there were no medical doctors, and many doctors in smaller Texas towns refused to treat Mexican-Americans except in extreme cases. Particularly for poor barrio residents in remote areas of the state, the curandero's herbs were the only available medicine. Thus, many barrio re-

sidents have grown up totally removed from modern medicine. Even if the doctor visit is paid for and transportation is provided, a client may be apprehensive or even miss the appointment because of unfamiliarity.

The most important resource in the old barrio is the intangible sense of community, retained long after America became a suburban society. In the barrio, people knew they could borrow a ride from the fortunate few who owned automobiles. They knew they could use the grocer's telephone—often the only phone in the barrio. Or they knew the barber would lend them some money or help them fill out an application form in English. In a hundred ways, residents depended on the barrio resources which many of them still seek today.

Social Trends

The major social trends in the Texas Mexican-American's recent past have tended to contribute to a sense of alienation. This alienation, in turn, makes it difficult for many Mexican-Americans to relate to modern caseworkers, and vice-versa.

Immigration

Mexicans have moved across the Rio Grande into Texas since the early 1800s when it was legal. In the 1870s, Texas saw an increase of poor Mexicans coming into the Blackland Prairie between San Antonio and Houston. When the 1910 Mexican Revolution erupted, hundreds of thousands of Mexicans poured into Texas. These were wealthy as well as poor Mexicans. They also settled in rural areas of the Blackland Prairie and the Rio Grande Valley. By 1920 many of the counties such as Caldwell, Comal, and Karnes had as high as 90 percent Mexican immigrant population in the rural communities and areas.

In Texas today, many potential DHR client families are of this generation of Mexican-born immigrants. Although they are Mexican citizens, most have lived and worked in Texas for over half a century. Their families have grown up in the American culture, and they have no hope of ever returning to Mexico.

Urbanization

By the 1920s, farm life was beginning to decline in Texas. Thousands of Mexican immigrants began to join native Tejano citizens in a steady flow into the metropolitan areas. Barrios in Houston and San Antonio became extremely overcrowded. Other cities such as Brownsville, Corpus Christi, Dallas, Austin, and El Paso began to attract their own share of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans.

The Mexican and Mexican-American urbanites were the last ethnic group to move into the cities, other ethnic groups having urbanized by the 1870s. Thus, Mexican-Americans were seen as latecomers. Their cultural differences were compounded by an unfriendly urban setting. Younger Mexican-Americans have begun to assert themselves in the urban milieu, but earlier generations have, in most cases, internalized the sense of being unwanted by the city. Without knowing this, a modern caseworker may misinterpret a Mexican-American parent's attitude as hostile or confused, when it may actually be one of precaution or even fear.

Repatriation

During the Depression of the 1930s, economic hardships were especially acute for the newly urbanizing and rural Mexican immigrants and Mexican-Americans. When they came to the local welfare agencies for relief, they were often rejected or handed over to the Immigration Service for deportation. In

During the 1930s, many Texas citizens were repatriated along with Mexican aliens. The memory of that time still lingers in the barrio particularly among older Mexican-Americans.

1931 the Immigration Service began a program of "repatriation." Immigration service agents searched automobiles and houses throughout the barrios. In thousands of cases, Mexican-born parents were whisked away to remote parts of Mexico. Since the law allowed for their American-born families to "voluntarily" accompany them, untold numbers of Mexican-American citizens were deported to Mexico. Today, many Mexican-Americans remember the total lack of regard for family and individual dignity displayed by the U.S. government. The integral role played by the welfare agents in this "repatriation" program may help to explain why many elderly Mexican-Americans still called the DHR caseworker an "investigator."

Migration

When the economic depression of the 1930s shattered, once and for all, the economic basis of the small farm in Texas, hundreds of thousands of Mexican and Mexican-American sharecroppers or *medieros* (med YEH ros) were driven into migrant life. Overcrowdedness, unemployment, and job discrimination forced almost half of the Mexican-Americans in Texas into life in the cotton fields around the state from 1930 to 1960.

Migrants lived in trucks, tents, barns, and in unimproved labor camps. They had the nation's highest mortality and disease rates for decades. Prohibited from entering many Texas cities or from using public facilities, these Mexican-American citizens had to adapt to a way of life which scarcely allowed for bath tubs, toilets, private bedrooms and kitchens, or any form of aid from the government. An Agricultural Extension study in 1953 found farmers in West Texas counties closing down schools that registered Mexican-American migrant children for classes (Texas Agricultural Extension Service, *Cotton and Manpower*, Bulletin 762, 1953). Needless to say, all of these factors are reflected heavily in education, mortality, and other social patterns of Mexican-American life even today. Another obvious result is the actual movement of the Mexican-American population from the South-Central Texas region to the Central, North, and West Texas cities which grew in the 1950s and 1960s such as Lubbock, Midland, and Abilene.

Migrant workers, "following the crop" throughout the state have experienced and adapted to the most stressful conditions of life in this country.

The net result is that the social worker may encounter some Mexican-Americans who appear hostile, disbelieving, or distrustful, overly agreeable, or anxious to part company. It is possible that the worker may never see any of these traits in a Mexican-American. In intercultural relations, nevertheless, it is imperative that workers be able to identify and understand significant cultural traits in themselves and in their clients. They can then proceed to the business at hand—the delivery of services.

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2.2

Realities of Life in the Barrio

Topic

Situational conditions and effects on barrio life

Objectives

1. List three situational conditions related to child welfare in the barrio.
2. List three resources useful to child welfare in the barrio.

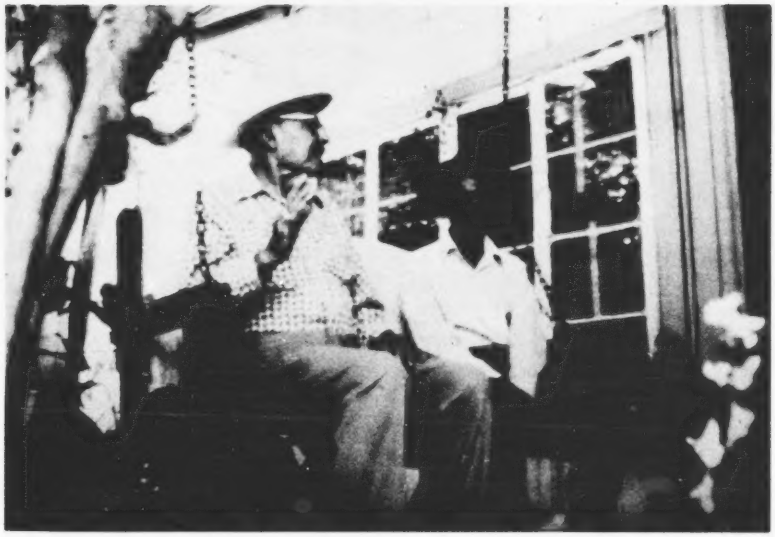
Activity

Discussion and Coursebook reading

Situational Conditions

In learning about service delivery to Mexican-Americans, a child welfare worker may find it helpful to know that there are certain conditions which tend to appear repeatedly in Mexican-American cases. It is important to remember that these conditions are more directly related to the situation in which these clients find themselves, rather than being related to the traditional Mexican culture. This distinction may help the worker in identifying the real source of the problem, as well as possible resources. The following discussion is intended to help the worker to be prepared in case these problems are encountered. This is not to say that the caseworker should necessarily expect to find these problems in a Mexican-American case.

1. *Poverty:* Poverty is closely related to medical neglect in Mexican-Americans. For example, a 1976 survey of 292 Mexican-Americans in a poor barrio of San Antonio revealed that 17 percent of the illnesses went untreated because of lack of transportation, and 70 percent went untreated because of financial problems. Fifty percent reported that transportation was "extremely difficult."
2. *Education:* It has been well documented that Mexican-Americans have the lowest educational level in the state. Today's Mexican-American parents in the child welfare caseload are the generation of students who underwent segregation and the transition to integration in public schools in the 1950s. Obviously, this affects their ability to fill out government forms and application blanks. Another pertinent effect discovered by the San Antonio survey cited above is that many Mexican-American parents did not know the normal temperature of a child or the correct treatment for diarrhea.
3. *Language:* Language remains an important factor in service delivery to Mexican-Americans. Mexican-Americans are part of the most "language loyal" ethnic group in the country. English-speaking workers must be aware of the distortion of messages received through translation. An example of this is when the worker asks the parent of a child "Who watches this child during the day?" The parent or relative may say "Nobody." She may mean to say "Nobody in particular, all of the adults in our household watch the child during the day," but the translation could give the erroneous message that the child goes unsupervised during the day.
4. *Undocumented Immigrants:* A child welfare worker scarcely needs to be told that undocumented immigrants can greatly complicate a family case. But if the worker is never informed that one or more family members are undocumented immigrants, the case may be even more than usually frustrating. Members of such a family may elude interviews and evade questions even at the expense of much needed services. They may appear hostile, distrusting, or even threatening. Indeed, they may interpret the child welfare worker as a great threat to their family unity. Under these circumstances, even the case of mild neglect may prove extremely difficult to deal with.



Compadres, including godparents or padrinos *and* madrinas, *play a vital role in the guidance and support of children in the Mexican-American community.*

5. *Physical Health:* A survey of 6,000 Mexican-American children in San Antonio between 1972 and 1975 reported that two-thirds of these children had health problems. The most commonly found problems were dental cavities, nutrition, infective parasites, and ear and hearing problems.

Resources

The nuclear family and the extended family appear to have very substantial importance in the Mexican-American culture. These and other community institutions represent valuable resources to child welfare workers. Workers must be able to understand, identify, and cultivate these resources whenever possible. The actual patterns will vary from locality to locality, and are affected by the extent to which Mexican-American families have replaced traditional Mexican-American cultural patterns with those of the Anglo society.

1. *Family and Extended Family:* The Mexican-American family may be a source of assistance to a child welfare worker. A caseworker should attempt to identify any nearby relatives of a client for assistance in counseling, child care, or financial problems if the client is willing. Sometimes, a relative must be reminded or encouraged to assist in the child welfare case. For example, an uncle may disclaim any responsibility for a niece who frequents taverns and neglects her children. But the uncle may respond if reminded that it is the children who need his help more than the negligent mother. Other relatives may be "cultivated" in this manner.

2. *Compadrazgo:* The community ties among Mexican-Americans are often reinforced by the system of informal kinship known as *compadrazgo* which links individuals of different families. A *compadre* and *comadre* are more than just the godparents to a child. They have social and religious ties to the godchild and the parents. These ties often include the responsibility for moral, physical, and social upbringing. Thus, a child's *padrino* (godfather) or *madrina* (godmother) may be called upon to assist in a child welfare case.

3. *Teachers, Coaches, and Barrio Resources:* One of the facts to emerge from the school walk-outs of the 1960s was that Mexican-American children have few role models with whom to identify in the larger community. This places a

higher premium on those few role models with whom they can identify. A junior high school coach may ordinarily serve as a role model only for aspiring athletes. But to a frustrated Mexican-American student in a school with few Mexican-American teachers, the Mexican-American coach may be the only role model. Although a teacher may not exercise great influence directly on the child's behavior, the teacher who may be well known in the community might still be important in working with the child's parents.

. The curandero is usually another respected member of the Mexican-American community. Particularly with older or more traditional Mexican-Americans, the curandero still has much influence in barrio life. The curandero can also be expected to have the child's welfare at heart. He may lend invaluable assistance in working with family problems.

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2.3

The Caseworker in the Barrio

Topics

Obstacles to effective casework intervention

Objectives

1. List one possible worker obstacle to effective intervention.
2. List one possible client obstacle to effective intervention.

Activities

Slide show and discussion

Several obstacles may arise to obstruct communication between a worker and a Mexican-American client. There is no accurate method of recording which obstacles are most prevalent. But if workers are aware of possible obstacles, they can avoid them in each case. Following are three possible worker-related obstacles to effective communication:

1. *Impersonality:* Because child welfare workers must record and document the facts of a case in a limited amount of time, even the most conscientious workers may allow their preoccupations to affect their own demeanor with clients. The worker may be thinking, "I must be careful to record all the facts accurately in case these facts are taken to court," but to the client he appears to be thinking "This lady is not an individual, only another case to me." To a client, the worker may appear overbearing or condescending. In such a case, a client might just give meaningless or vague information.
2. *Cultural Insensitivity:* Caseworkers must be sensitive to cultural values of their clients while attempting to counsel them. If a young Mexican-American mother has several children, she probably places much importance on her child-bearing capability. Indeed, her parents, her husband, and her in-laws may all reinforce this attitude in her. A caseworker who responds to a "failure-

It is extremely important for workers to assess each client individually, and to open channels of honest communication by employing personal warmth and sensitivity, always according clients their own sense of dignity and worth.

to-thrive" referral on such a case must be aware of the extreme sensitivity the young mother will feel at being told (in front of her in-laws) that she is an inadequate mother. Even though corrective action may be necessary, the method must be carefully applied so as to avoid compromising the worker-client relationship.

3. *Stereotyping:* Stereotypes are invisible only to the person who believes them. To the person being stereotyped, they are blatant and familiar. A caseworker's remarks or actions may assume something in the client. For example, by saying, "Oh, you speak English so well," a caseworker is really saying, "I assumed all Mexican-Americans spoke only Spanish." Or by saying, "Oh, you were born in Texas?" one assumes Mexican nativity.

Possible client obstacles to effective communication include the following:

1. *Poor education and lack of parent training:* A young Mexican-American mother with little or no training in parenting skills may be difficult to counsel. This situation is worsened if the young mother cannot read well or if she finds it difficult to follow the doctor's instructions.

2. *Alienation:* Many Mexican-Americans in the barrio have a quite negative perception of the Texas Department of Human Resources, along with all other official or governmental agencies. As one barrio resident said, "The Welfare Department does two things: they give food stamps and they take away your babies." This probably represents the extreme view of a minority of persons, but it may partially explain some of the Department's outreach problems in the barrio.

3. *"Passive Aggression":* Mexican-American clients have been said by many caseworkers to courteously refuse services or involvement. Their responses are often indirect, such as saying the word "No" when the content of the response is really "Yes." For example, when asked if she needs dental care, a client may respond, "No, I can eat soft foods." This should not be misconstrued as dishonesty. It may in fact be pride. It is more likely apprehensiveness or unwillingness to reveal weaknesses or confidential information. It is related to the sense of alienation described above. As barriers to political participa-

tion have begun to dissolve, particularly in areas like South Texas, feelings of alienation have also begun to change. In any case, only the actual caseworker on the scene can make an accurate assessment and use his or her own judgement regarding such an obstacle.

Note

Sometimes, eligibility requirements and legal restrictions create obstacles for caseworkers and clients.

Individuation or Culture as an Excuse?

Every person is an individual distinctly different from other individuals; and every personality develops with its own unique characteristics. These characteristics vary not only from individual to individual, but from culture to culture. This unique development process is called individuation.

Child welfare workers are often involved in efforts to modify parental behavior which is harmful to children. Therefore it is essential, given the complex set of cultural and individual variables that may lie behind such behavior, for the caseworker to identify correctly the characteristic which is in fact causing harm. Great care must be taken to allow for the individual and cultural differences which are a part of American society, while attempting to rectify the harmful trait.

Because cultural variables are particularly noticeable, they may be blamed for a problem they are related to only incidentally. An example is the stern Mexican-American father who spanked his sixteen-year-old daughter severely for staying out past 9:00 p.m. on a weekday. The spanking left bruises, but the daughter accepted the punishment humbly. The child welfare worker made a note that "The father is of the traditional Mexican culture and is unrealistically strict with the daughter whom he expects to be subservient." In this case, the worker must be careful to distinguish between the punishment method which caused bruises and the reason for the discipline which even the daughter may believe to be appropriate. The method and harshness of punishment may be of concern to the worker; the reason for it is between the father and daughter, regardless of their culture.

Dr. Alexander Zaphiris, consultant to TDHR, has discovered an interesting pattern in his work in child welfare. He notes that normal discipline measures vary from culture to culture; that is, a rural Mexican-American parent may whip a misbehaving child on the legs with a leather strap, while an urban Anglo-American parent may restrict a child's television watching for a day. Abuse of children, however, tends to involve the same patterns regardless of culture. Cigarette burns are as likely to be found in one culture as another.

The interesting paradox, according to Zaphiris, is that even though abuse is cross-cultural, the abusive parents often try to attribute it to their culture. Conversely, parents who do employ culturally distinctive (but nonabusive) discipline measures think that these measures are common to all cultures.

Thus, culture may serve to confuse or complicate a child welfare case—sometimes because the caseworker mistakenly blames culture; and sometimes because the abusive parent falsely blames culture. In either case, the child's safety may depend upon the worker's ability to identify and distinguish between what is abuse and what is simply a cultural difference.

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2.4

Now, Let's Talk About It

Topic Free and Open Discussion

Activity Discussion

3.0

"The Mexican-American Family"

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3.1

The Mexican-American Child: DHR Perspective

Topic

Child Welfare caseload statistics

Objectives

1. Compare the neglect cases of Mexican-Americans to Anglos and Blacks.
2. Compare the abuse cases of Mexican-Americans to Anglos and Blacks.

Activity

Coursebook Reading

Of the Mexican-American family situations known to DHR Child Welfare programs there are significantly more neglect cases than abuse cases. This is true for Anglos and Blacks also. But a statewide review from 1974 to 1977 of validated cases reveals that Mexican-Americans have proportionately more neglect and less abuse than Anglos or Blacks during that four-year period.

A detailed analysis of the 1977 validated cases showed that the abuse rates are very similar for all three major ethnic groups in most types of abuse. Anglo-Americans constituted 60 percent of the abuse victims in 1977, while Blacks were 17 percent, and Mexican-Americans 21 percent of the total. The greatest difference in types of reported abuse was in emotional abuse. Twenty-eight percent of the Anglo abuse cases and 28 percent of the Mexican-American caseload were of the emotional type, but only 18 percent of the Black abuse cases were emotional. All three ethnic groups registered similar proportions of bruises, and there was only a three-point difference in sexual abuse (Anglo, 13 percent, Black, 11 percent, and Mexican-American, 14 percent). Although the abuse statistics did not suggest great variation in percentages, there may be significant variations in the reasons or cultural factors leading to specific incidents of abuse.

The most significant differences in the ethnic group statistics for 1977 appear in types of neglect. Mexican-Americans have significantly greater educational (7.3 percent) and medical (12 percent) neglect than Anglos (5.4 percent educational; 7 percent medical) or Black (5.1 percent educational; 7.9 percent medical). The Mexican-Americans have slightly fewer supervisory neglect incidents and significantly fewer cases of abandonment than Anglos or Blacks.

In 1977, there were 128 validated or suspected fatalities due to neglect or abuse in Texas. Sixty-one (47.7 percent) of these were Anglo, forty (31.3 percent) were Black, and twenty-five (19.5 percent) were Mexican-American.

These statistics seem to indicate that, generally speaking, the more severe the abuse or neglect, the more similar it is among the different ethnic groups. The less serious the neglect or abuse, the less similar it is in different ethnic groups. This seems to corroborate the aforementioned statement by Dr. Alexander Zaphiris that child abuse tends to be the same in all ethnic groups, while nonabusive problems of neglect tend to be different.

Case Reading Study: The above statistics may be compared with a case-reading survey conducted in spring of 1978. The survey sampled 25 percent of the case records of the Child Welfare offices in San Antonio, Austin, and Edinburg, Texas. Although this small sample was limited in number and surveyed cities with varying Mexican-American population, it extracted more detailed information from the records. Primarily, the survey reviewed the use of collateral resources, the use of barrio or family resources, the background facts, and the social patterns of Anglos, Blacks, and Mexican-Americans in Child Welfare case records.

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Sixty percent of the case records were Mexican-American, 29 percent Anglo, and 11 percent were Black. These cases revealed, as did the CANRIS statistics, that Mexican-Americans had a higher percentage of neglect cases (77 percent) than Anglos (72 percent) or Blacks (32 percent). The case reading survey differed from the CANRIS statistics in the abuse categories, however. Mexican-Americans had a similar percentage (22 percent) of abuse cases to Anglos (19 percent), but substantially less than Blacks (49 percent). And they had a substantially lower percentage of reported sex abuse (1 percent) as compared to Anglos (9 percent) or Blacks (16 percent).

One interesting fact to emerge from the case reading survey is that many of the abuse cases are directly related to harsh or abusive discipline. Mexican-American abuse cases often involve fathers who are too harsh or unrealistic in their discipline measures. One such case involved the use of an electric cord to whip a child as punishment. According to CANRIS statistics, however, the proportion of mothers and fathers as perpetrators of child abuse is the same in the Mexican-American culture as it is in the Anglo culture.

Workers make regular use of other agency resources such as MH-MR, WIC, or the Public Health Nurse significantly more than family or barrio resources. In many cases, collateral resources are abundantly available, while the worker's personal contact with a client is limited. Increasingly, there appears to be a trend away from direct casework counseling. One exception to this pattern was found in which caseworkers in one particular city were making excellent use of family and barrio resources—the extended family, relatives, neighbors, and others. It is important to note in almost all cases where a worker used family and barrio resources, these resources had to be "cultivated" for several weeks. In some cases, homemakers were introduced to good advantage to train uneducated mothers in hygiene.

It should be mentioned that, according to the records, many of the clients of the TDHR Child Welfare caseload do not appear to have the customary resources such as nearby relatives, community ties, close supportive friends, or compadres. Indeed, this may be a reason for their being clients in the first place. Many of these clients may have potential resources nearby. It is, therefore, essential that caseworkers be as conscientious of, and alert to, potential resources in all cases.

3.2

Mexican-American Family Dynamics

Topic

Family roles and relationships

Objectives

1. Give one example of family roles in the Mexican-American family.
2. List three examples of how poverty may lead to neglect.

Activity

Videotape

Characteristics of Behavior

The Mexican-American clients of the TDHR Child Welfare caseload have certain behavioral characteristics which reflect their family roles and attitudes. It would be almost impossible to list all of these, but some can be offered as examples for identification. Following is a list of examples of adult behavior patterns or attitudes:

In the barrio, there has always existed a widespread informal system of de facto adoption and foster parenting. Grandmothers and aunts often function as prime parents to children.

1. *Family pressure:* In many close-knit families, the oldest adults all share in determining policy or behavior. This group decision-making function can also control certain actions by family members. Thus, if a young man in the family is mistreating his children, a caseworker might consider enlisting the aid of the grandmother, aunts, and uncles instead of expecting the young wife to single-handedly control her abusive husband.

2. *Day Care:* In many Mexican-American families, all of the adults share in the day care of the children of the family. Working mothers may bring the child to one relative's house, usually the grandmother's for the day. But several adults may share in actual supervision during the day.

3. *Grandmother adoption or care:* It is common for a grandmother to take responsibility for her grandchildren if they are neglected by their mother. This solves the problem of day care, but it may lead to the grandmother's permanent attachment to the children and vice-versa. The children are thereby informally adopted, and may be difficult to remove later, even if poor health limits the grandmother's ability to take care of the children.

4. *Giving a child away:* It is not uncommon for relatives—grandmother, aunts, sisters—to simply ask a young mother to give them a child to rear as their own. The mother does so willingly in many such cases.

5. *Strict Discipline:* A father may demand that his teenage children be home by 9:00 p.m. But as soon as one of them marries, that child becomes an adult with the privileges of adulthood, merely by virtue of marriage. Giving birth to a child also grants a person higher status in many families.

6. *Illigitimate births:* A young girl pregnant with an illigitimate child may be severely ostracized, or even disowned by her family. However, after the birth of the child, members of the family may lend vital support to the young mother and child.

Following are some characteristic patterns of behavior in many Mexican-American children:

"Youth gangs" are groups from the same housing project or neighborhood who come together for mutual support and/or defense from hostile groups in the adjacent neighborhoods.

1. *Child "Hustlers":* The children who are likely to encounter TDHR Child Welfare programs may have developed specialized survival skills in the barrio which ordinarily are not desirable. For example, such children may have to know how to deal in various forms of illicit trade—to "hustle." These children are often forced to become members of youth gangs as a matter of mutual defense.

2. *Independence:* Low-income barrio youths are often very independent and may be difficult to supervise when out of their home environment. They may roam at large daily in the barrio. Such youths may be restless and uncomfortable in an interview or office setting. The restlessness may be misinterpreted as a nervous disorder or even paranoia.

3. *Eldest Sibling:* It is common for the eldest sibling in Mexican-American families to assume responsibility for the care of younger children in the family. This responsibility and authority may continue even after the eldest sibling is married and living apart from the younger children. Indeed, the younger children may respond to the married sibling even more than to their own parents in the home.

4. *The Children's Role:* The children in many Mexican-American families function almost as an independent group within the family. For example, they may ask their parents for another baby sister or baby brother and be granted their wish.

5. *The Child's Responsibility for the Family Name:* A daughter who stays out on a date past midnight or later may be forced by her parents to marry her escort. This is done to save the family name against gossip regarding lax morals in the family.

Note

All of the above factors are important to consider when placing a Mexican-American child in a family that may not have these characteristics. Even some Mexican-American families or foster parents may find it difficult to accept these characteristics in a foster child.

The unemployment rate for Mexican-American men is well over a third higher than for Anglos.

Valid Neglect or Poverty?

Many TDHR child neglect cases are so closely related to poverty that it would be difficult to imagine how the parents could provide all of the basic needs of their children. According to a study by David C. Perry and Alfred J. Watkins, "the *source(s) of poverty* for approximately three-fourths of the Sun Belt's inner-city poor *are the jobs they have*" (Emphasis added). In other words, Mexican-Americans need not be unemployed to be poor. A caseworker can usually distinguish between poverty and outright neglect, but there are many situations which make the distinction difficult. Following is a brief background on some aspects of this cloudy issue:

Lack of education is one of the major factors leading to the neglect cases of TDHR. A Mexican-American mother or father who has little or no education may know little about hygiene, nutrition, prescription drugs, money management, or any of the other skills which most Americans learn in school, through literature, or public information services.

Diet and housing are also directly affected by poverty. Poor Mexican-Americans often depend on the least expensive food which requires little preparation and few cooking utensils. Houses and bedrooms are often overcrowded. Bath facilities may be inadequate or chronically out of order. These conditions lead to hopelessly dirty and lice-infested living areas.

Poor health and physical impairments may be the result of years of living without the availability of medical assistance. Many Mexican-Americans today were brought up in towns where the doctor refused to treat Mexican-Americans at all. Obtaining dental braces or corrective surgery was beyond the reach of these people. Even today, they may not be aware that doctors can or will treat such conditions as disfigurations, congenital defects, and physiological disorders. Compounding the lack of experience is the lack of trust in unfamiliar doctors and hospitals.

All of the above situations may serve to complicate a child neglect case. The object in discussing this background is not to rationalize or justify neglect, but instead to heighten the consciousness of caseworkers to the actual living con-

Overcrowded housing with inadequate sanitary facilities is a typical condition of today's barrio.

ditions and extreme sensitivity of Mexican-Americans who may otherwise appear to be totally irresponsibile or intentionally negligent.

References

Fred Fiedler, and Harold Dickson, *Final Evaluation Report*, Health Services Research Institute, The University of Texas Health Science Center, San Antonio, November 1, 1975.

3.3

Mexican-American Family Dynamics and the Caseworker

Topic Caseworker intervention in the Mexican-American family

Objective Identify characteristics and roles in a Mexican-American family.

Activity Role-playing and discussion

3.4

Now, What Do You Think?

Topic Open Discussion and Evaluation of course content

Activity Discuss, review, and evaluate the curriculum.

GLOSSARY

Aijada	(i HAH da) God-daughter.
Aijado	(i HAH do) God-son.
Barrio	(BAR yo) Neighborhood; the Mexican-American part of town. Usually a lower-income neighborhood.
Caida de Mollera	(Cah EE da deh mo YEHR uh) Fallen fontanel; a disorder in infants, believed to be caused by shock or jolt to the infant; can be cured.
Calpulli	(kal POO ye) The Aztec concept of a tribal community.
Chicano(a)	A Mexican-American; usually connoting a more radical, more politically active Mexican-American; (female, *Chicana)*
Comadre	(ko MAH dre) A close and intimate female, family friend; often, the godmother of a person's child.
Compadre	(kom PAH dre) A close and intimate male family friend, usually the godfather of a person's child.
Compadrazgo	(kom pad RAS koh) An informal system of close and intimate ties between members of separate families; includes compadres, comadres, padrinos, etc.
Curanderismo	(koor ahn der EES mo) The Mexican practice of home remedies and folk healing, often involving prayer and the use of medicinal herbs.
Curandero(a)	(koor ahn DER o) The person who administers curanderismo; the male (female, *Curandera*).
Empacho	(em PAH cho) A digestive disorder; usually in infants. A lump of food on the wall of the stomach or the intestine causing pain; can be cured by Curanderismo.
Escuelita	(es kwe LEE tah) A Mexican-American field school conducted in a neighborhood home during the period that Mexican-Americans were excluded from the public schools.
Madrina	(mah DREE na) Godmother.
Mediero	(med YEH ro) A Mexican-American sharecropper.
Mestizo(a)	(mess TEE so) A person of the mixed-blood race of Spanish and Aztec; a Mexican. Sometimes called *raza* (female, *Mestiza*).
Minero	(mee NEH ro) A Mexican-American miner.
Pachuco(a)	(pa CHOO ko) A Mexican-American youth who wore distinctive attire during the years between 1930 and 1960; usually urban and considered defiant. Also called a zoot-suiter (female, *Pachuca*)
Padrino	(pad REE no) Godfather.
Susto	An illness caused by fright, usually associated with

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	a shocking incident such as a near accident; can be cured by Curanderismo.
Tecato	(teh KAH to) Heroin.
Tejano(a)	(teh HAH no) A native Mexican or Mexican-American of Texas; usually before the arrival of Anglo-Americans (female, *Tejana*).
Zoot-Suiter	A pachuco.

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